



**Indiana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society  
Position Statement on  
Land Use Management and Aquatic Resources  
03/07/02**

Indiana's fisheries and aquatic resources are an integral, but often overlooked, component of our communities. Many Hoosiers recognize the recreational and commercial resources provided by healthy fisheries. Access to water enhances our quality of life and increases the value of our property. There are also less obvious benefits of fish and aquatic resources as a basis of support for many commercially valuable furbearing animals, for waterfowl hunting, and ecological systems. Fisheries are a renewable natural resource that can be managed on a sustainable basis for future generations.

**Healthy fisheries and aquatic resources contribute to the economy**

Streams and lakes are clearly significant and well-recognized resources, as demonstrated by the millions of dollars being spent by many communities on greenway enhancement adjacent to those water bodies. In Indianapolis alone, urban planners projected that the city would spend up to \$100 million dollars in the first decade of waterfront development along the White River (Morgan 1993) and eventually include over 12,000 acres of recreation and conservation areas along these urban streams (Woolpert 1994). Public attention to the St. Joseph River in South Bend and Mishawaka has resulted in development of a thriving steelhead trout fishery that is uniquely accessible to many urban residents. The project consisted of a \$15 million joint effort with the state of Michigan that annually generates about \$6 million in income to local communities (IDNR 2001).

Recreational and commercial values of fisheries provide millions of dollars to local communities and thousands of hours of recreation for citizens throughout the state of Indiana. The 1996 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service national survey estimated that there are 992,000 adult anglers in Indiana who contribute over \$799 million to the Hoosier economy by purchases involved in pursuing this sport. An average of 502 inland commercial fishing licenses and 1,782 net tags were sold annually from 1977 to 1994 (Carnahan 1995). The average annual estimated total inland commercial fishing harvest was 165,360 pounds. Over 60 licensed charter boat companies generate income by taking people fishing for hire on Indiana's inland waters and Lake Michigan. Canoe liveries, campgrounds, marinas, and other water-based businesses also rely on high quality aquatic systems.

**Citizens want healthy fisheries and aquatic resources**

Indiana citizens recognize the critical importance of protecting aquatic resources. Eighty-one percent of anglers polled in 1994 felt that the Division of Fish and Wildlife should increase the emphasis on protecting Indiana streams and rivers from pollution. In a 1995 survey, 80 percent of Hoosiers stated that they strongly or moderately supported efforts to protect Indiana wetlands. The public outcry raised by the devastating 1999 fish kill on urbanized stretches of the West Fork of the White River indicates that citizens are concerned about degradation of stream resources. Prospective buyers often prefer homesites on land that borders lakes and rivers. As demand increases, public access to water-based recreational resources is more difficult to achieve.

The increasing pressure of water-based recreation and development has motivated several recent efforts that focus on long-term resource management. After two years of research and public input on the problems facing lakes and reservoirs, the 26-member Indiana Lakes Management Work Group produced an analysis of 48 potential solutions. Many of these recommendations have been implemented with an emphasis on improving the interaction between development interests and aquatic resource management.

A number of state and federal agencies provide funding directly to landowners for restoration of degraded aquatic systems. For example, last year the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided over \$8 million to Indiana landowners for protection of water quality and received an additional \$6 million in unfunded requests. The cost and difficulty of restoring aquatic resources testifies to the need for protecting them where they already exist.

### **Good planning can minimize negative impacts on critical fisheries and aquatic resources**

The Indiana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society supports planning that minimizes negative impacts on fisheries, aquatic habitat, and water quality. Each planning jurisdiction should examine the balance of land uses and the contribution of each use to the well being of citizens now and in the future. Development near water should consider the economic and environmental benefits provided by aquatic resources. The largest negative impacts often result from developments scattered across the landscape or placed without adequate buffers to treat or store runoff.

Development that supports the renewal of urban areas, older suburban areas, brownfields, historic districts, and other established building sites should be of higher priority than new development in areas without existing infrastructure. We support the conversion of areas that are appropriate for greenspace to more natural conditions so they can provide environmental and other benefits within a matrix of developed land. We encourage development that concentrates buildings and leaves large portions of the original tract undisturbed wherever possible, especially in areas where intact forests or wetlands are adjacent to streams and lakes.

### **Fisheries professionals can help ensure a bright future for fish and people**

Fisheries professionals can assist in the planning process as a source of technical information for planners and the citizens they serve. They can identify areas where aquatic systems should be protected to serve desirable environmental needs and fisheries resources. They can suggest ways to preserve the beauty and serenity of lakes and streams. Fisheries biologists are trained to work with other professionals on issues related to soil erosion, water quality, wildlife habitat, and other landowner interests. They can be contacted through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Purdue Cooperative Extension offices or through a number of environmental consulting firms.

#### **Contacts:**

Julie Hendricks, President, tel. 812-644-7717; Gwen White, Land Use Issues, tel. 317-232-4093.  
IAFS Website - <http://www.bsu.edu/csh/bio/inafs/>